

TESTIMONY OF POLLY L. HANSON, CHIEF
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WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY
BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY

“THE LONDON ATTACKS: TRAINING TO RESPOND IN A MASS TRANSIT”
ENVIRONMENT”
JULY 26, 2005

Chairman King and Members of the Committee, good morning and thank you for asking WMATA to testify at this hearing. I am Polly Hanson, Chief of the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Background on WMATA and MTPD

By way of background, WMATA was created in 1967 as an Interstate Compact agency through enactment of legislation by the U.S. Congress, and by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the State of Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The Metro System was designed to serve the constituencies of the National Capital Region, including employees of the federal government, the residents of the region, the citizens of our nation who come to Washington to do business with the federal government, and the millions of people who visit from throughout the world.

Since the mid 1960's, there has been dramatic growth and change in the National Capital Region. As population and employment in this region has skyrocketed, the demands on and expectations of WMATA have also grown exponentially. Each day we provide 1.2 million trips on our rail and bus systems. We are the second largest subway system and fifth largest bus system in the United States. Metro is widely recognized as being critical to the operation of the federal government. Over 150,000 federal employees (45 percent of the region's federal employees) participate in the Metrochek program. Nearly half of all Metrorail stations serve federal facilities, approximately 10 percent of Metro's daily ridership uses stations next to the Capitol and Pentagon.

The Metro Transit Police Department was established in 1976. MTPD is the nation's first non federal tri-state transit police force. We have authorized strength of 400 sworn transit police officers and 101 special police officers. Our purpose is to prevent crime, protect Metro's customers, employees, facilities and revenues and enforce laws, ordinances, rules and regulations.

WMATA's Regional Emergency Preparedness Training Initiatives

As the largest transit provider for the National Capital Region, Metro takes its responsibility in homeland security with the seriousness is demands. WMATA's approach to transit security involves a partnership between employees, customers, the transit police and other public safety departments in the region, and the federal government. Our training initiatives designed to enhance both WMATA and the region's emergency preparedness reflect these partnerships.

Just this spring, Metro Transit Police launched a new training initiative entitled "Managing Metro Emergencies." The training was devised and developed in response to the Madrid bombings as well as a recent series of service disruptions that forced thousands of customers to evacuate the Metrorail system. The "Managing Metro Emergencies" course is providing approximately 1,500 regional law enforcement, fire

and rescue, department of transportation and WMATA personnel enhanced training for mitigating, evacuating, transporting and recovering from a major service disruption in our system. WMATA also intends to use a portion of its FY05 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Bus Transit Grant allocation towards the development of an anti-terror training initiative focused on bus operations. All the local and regional bus operators that feed into WMATA's bus systems will be invited to participate.

WMATA's Emergency Response Training Facility opened in 2002, and is the only transit facility of its kind in the nation that is available 24 hours per day, seven days a week to train emergency personnel. The facility includes a mock train tunnel that allows regional emergency responders to train for disasters such as smoke/fire, collisions and potential terrorist incidents in a transit/tunnel environment. WMATA's emergency management team trains an estimated 2000 federal, state and local emergency personnel each year. The facility was awarded the American Public Transportation Association's Management Innovation Award for 2004.

WMATA also continues to be an active participant in various regional exercises. WMATA sponsored a series of table top exercises with all key regional players, including federal agencies, as part of our effort to enhance continuity of operations planning (COOP) following the September 11, 2001 attacks. WMATA also participates in regional drills and exercises sponsored by the DHS, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and various local jurisdictions in the National Capital Region.

Leveraging Federal Partnerships in Technology Development and Security Procedures

I note Mr. Chairman that your subcommittee also has jurisdiction over science and technology issues and would like to take a moment to also discuss our training initiatives associated with our partnerships with the federal government in emerging detection technologies that are applicable to the transit environment.

WMATA continues to serve as a test-bed for the federal government and model for the country on new transit security initiatives. Metro's chemical detector system, commonly referred to as "PROTECT," has become a model for other transit agencies across the nation and around the world. The early warning data flowing from PROTECT is fully integrated into our Operations Control Center and the data and live images can also be accessed at safe zones for use by incident commanders in the region responsible for responding to an event. Federal partners who worked with WMATA in the development of the PROTECT system include the Departments of Justice, Energy, Transportation and Homeland Security. Working with our federal partners, WMATA continues to offer training and technical assistance on the PROTECT system to interested transit systems in the United States and around the world. WMATA is actively engaging the Department of Homeland Security in efforts to leverage the advances obtained by the PROTECT program to other emerging applications in the chemical, biological and explosive detection areas.

In January of this year, Metro Transit Police and Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration (TSA) collaborated to enhance security at Metrorail stations and on trains during the days surrounding the presidential inauguration. The partnership with TSA, which included the use of federal screeners equipped with explosive trace detection gear and canines teams supplementing Metro's teams of officers and explosive detection canines, performed without a hitch and is being applied to other special events across the country. We are also working with DHS on expanding the application and training of personnel in the area of behavior assessment screening of passengers in a transit environment. In accordance with HSPD-5: Management of Domestic Incidents, Metro Transit Police officers have been NIMS/ICS trained and certified, and we have started to expand the training to key management and operations personnel.

WMATA also has a long standing productive working relationship with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on a wide range of emergency preparedness initiatives linked to training and exercises. The FTA has provided WMATA and other transit agencies technical assistance and support for continuity of operations planning (COOP), emergency drills, ongoing security forums and research coordinated through the Volpe Center, and emergency training through the Transportation Safety Institute. In the case of training, the relationship has been a two-way street, with WMATA providing the FTA with in-kind instructional support for rail safety and emergency management courses.

Public Awareness/Education Campaigns

A critical component towards ensuring that all the training we conduct with our employees, first responders and federal government raises the region's emergency preparedness level is to also constantly engage our customers. WMATA has increased public announcements to our customers, stressing the need to be attentive to their surroundings. Our recent public outreach efforts include campaigns known as, "See it, Say it" and "Is that your bag?," which was cited by former Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Under Secretary Hutchinson as an effective tool for raising passenger awareness and involvement in the transit environment. We are also conducting monthly "Open Houses" at rail stations during the morning rush hour. During these events, officials from the Metro Transit Police and our safety and communications departments are on hand to answer questions from customers as well as distribute emergency preparedness/safety brochures and expanding upon emergency evacuation procedures that can be found at our web site: www.wmata.com.

Last year, Metro Transit Police launched a Metro Citizens Corps program that provides Metro-specific training ranging from rail safety and emergency preparedness and response to identification of terrorist activity. Citizen participation initially consists of Citizen Emergency Response Teams (CERT) already organized in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia.

In 2003, WMATA, the American Red Cross of the National Capital Area, the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Transit Administration co-sponsored a new national program designed to provide vital emergency preparedness information to the millions of American citizens who ride the subways, commuter trains and buses each day. The program, a partnership that also includes the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) features the distribution of **“Together We Prepare”** brochures to customers of transit systems.

Conclusion

WMATA appreciates the important contribution training provides towards enhancing our emergency preparedness and response capabilities and will continue to seek opportunities to work with our many partners in the National Capital Region to refine and expand upon the progress achieved to date. I would be happy to answer any questions posed by the Committee.